



THE
CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. T O W N,

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Felix convivium, in quod choraules non venit. MART:

To Mr. T O W N.

SIR!



Y wife is mad, stark mad ; and unless you can prescribe some remedy for that strange phrenzy that possesses her, my peace of mind must be for ever broken, and my fortune inevitably ruined. You must know, sir, that she is afflicted with a disorder exactly opposite to the bite of a *Tarantula* : for as that is said to admit of no cure but music, there is not a note in the *Gamut*, but what tends to heighten and inflame my wife's lunacy. I find it is the fashion in this age for fencers and fiddlers to publish Appeals to the public : wherefore, as you have hitherto listened to the complaints of husbands, I must beg you now to consider

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mine, and to suffer me also to Appeal to the public by means of your paper.

A FEW years ago business called me over to *Italy*; where this unfortunate woman received the first touches of this disorder. She soon conceived a violent passion for Taste in general, which settled at last in an unquenchable rage after musical compositions. Solos, Sonatas, Operas, and Concertos, became her sole employment and delight, and fingers and musicians her only company. At length full of *Italian* airs she returned to *England*, where also her whole happiness has been centered in the orchestra, and it has been her whole pride to be thought a *Connoisseur* in music. If there is an opera, oratorio, or concert, to be performed within the bills of mortality, I do not believe that the riches of the *Indies* could prevail on her to be absent. Two, and only two good consequences attend this madness, and those are, that she constantly attends St. *James's* chapel for the sake of the anthem and the rest of the music: and out of the many pounds idly squandered on minims and semi-quavers, some few are dedicated to charities, which are promoted by musical performances.

BUT what makes this rage after catgut more irksome and intolerable to me is, that I have not myself the least idea of what they call Taste, and it almost drives me mad to be pestered with it. I am a plain man, and have not the least spice of a *Connoisseur* in my composition, yet nothing will satisfy my wife unless I appear as fond of such nonsense as herself. About a month ago she prevailed on me to attend her to the Opera, where every dying fall made her expire, as well as Lady *Townly*. She was ravished with one air, in
extasies,

extasies at another, applauded *Ricciarelli*, encored *Mingotti*, and in short acted like an absolute madwoman; while the performance and her behaviour had a quite different effect upon me, who sat dumb with confusion, "most musical, "most melancholy," at her elbow. When we came home again, she seemed as happy as harmony could make her, but I must own, that I was all discord, and most heartily vexed at being made a fool in public. "Well, my dear, "said she, how do you like the opera?"—"Zouns, "madam, I would as soon be dragged through a horsepond, "as go to an opera with you again."—"O fie! but "you must be delighted with *The Mingotti*."—"The "Mingotti! The Devil."—"Well, I am sorry for it, "Sir Aaron, but I find you have no Ear."—"Ear, "madam? I had rather cut off my ears, than suffer them "to make me an idiot." To this she made me no reply, but began a favourite opera tune, and after taking a tour round the room like one of the fingers, left me alone.

If my wife could be satisfied, like other musical ladies, with attending public performances, and now and then thrumming on her harpsicord the tunes she hears there, I should be content. But she has also a concert of her own constantly once a week. Here she is in still greater raptures than at the opera, as all the music is chosen and appointed by herself. The expence of this whim is monstrous, for not one of these people will open their mouths, or rosin a single string, without being very well paid for it. Then she must have all the best hands and voices, and has almost as large a set of performers in pay as the manager of the opera. It puts me quite out of patience to see these fellows strutting about my house dressed up like lords and gentlemen. Not a
single

single fiddler or finger but what appears in lace or embroidery, and I once mistook my wife's chief musician for a foreign ambassador.

IT is impossible to recount the numberless follies to which this ridiculous passion for Music exposes her. Her devotion to the art, makes her almost adore the professors of it. A musician is a greater man in her eye than a duke, and she would sooner oblige an opera-finger than a countess. She is as busy in promoting their benefits as if she was to have the receipts of the house; and quarrels with all her acquaintance, who will not permit her to load them with tickets. Every fidler in town makes it his business to scrape an acquaintance with her, and an *Italian* is no sooner imported than she becomes a part of my wife's band of performers. In the late Opera disputes she has been a most furious partizan, and it is impossible for any patriot to feel more anxiety for the danger of *Blakeney* and *Minorca*, than she has suffered on account of the Opera, and the loss of *Mingotti*.

I do not believe my wife has a single idea except recitative, airs, counter-tenor, thorough-bass, &c. which are perpetually ringing in her head. When we sit together, instead of joining in any agreeable conversation, she is always either humming a tune, or "discouraging most eloquent" music." Nature has denied her a voice, but as *Italy* has given her Taste and a graceful manner, she is continually squeaking out strains less melodious, than the harmony of ballad-singing in our streets, or psalm-singing in a country church. To make her still more ridiculous, she learns to play on that masculine instrument the bass-viol; the pleasure of which nothing can prevail on her to forego, as the
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bass-viol, she daily tells me, contains the whole power and very soul of harmony.

WHAT method, Mr. TOWN, shall I pursue to cure my wife of this musical phrenzy? I have some thoughts of holding weekly a burlesque *Roratorio*, composed of mock-airs with grand accompaniments of the Jew's Harp, Wooden Spoons, and Marrowbones and Cleavers on the same day with my wife's concert; and have actually sent to two of Mrs. *Midnight's* hands to teach me the art and mystery of playing on the Broomstick and Hurdy-Gurdy, at the same time that my wife learns on the bass-viol. I have also a strong rough voice, which will enable me to roar out *Bumper Squire Jones*, *Roast Beef*, or some other old *English* ballad, whenever she begins to trill forth her melodious airs in *Italian*. If this has no effect, I will learn to beat the drum, or wind the post-horn: and if I should still find it impossible for noise and clamour to overcome the sound of her voices and instruments, I have half-resolved peremptorily to shut my doors against fiddlers and fidlers, and even to demolish her harpsichord and bass-viol.

BUT this, alas! is coming to extremities, which I am almost afraid to venture, and would endeavour to avoid. I have no aversion to music, but I would not be a fidler: nor do I dislike company, but I would as soon keep an inn, as convert my house into a theatre for all the idle things of both sexes to assemble at. But my wife's affections are so wedded to the *Gamut*, that I cannot devise any means to wean her from this folly. If I could make her fond of dress, or teach her to love cards, plays, or any thing but music I should be happy. This method of destroying

my peace with harmony, is no better than tickling me to death; and to squander away such sums of money on a parcel of bawling scraping rascals in laced coats and bag-wigs, is absolutely giving away my estate for an old song. You, Mr. TOWN, are a professed *Connoisseur*, therefore either give me a little Taste, or teach my wife to abandon it: for at present we are but a jangling pair, and there is not the least harmony between us, though, like bass and treble, we are obliged to join in concert.

I am,

S I R,

Your humble Servant,

AARON HUMKIN.